Guided by the Schools of Social Work, Law, and Medicine and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research brings together the resources of the University of Pennsylvania to enhance and assure the well-being of abused and neglected children and those at risk of maltreatment. By moving beyond traditional approaches, the Field Center utilizes an interdisciplinary model to integrate clinical care, research and education, inform local and national policy, and prepare the nation’s future leaders, for the benefit of children and their families.

The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice & Research Newsletter

FIELD CENTER MISSION STATEMENT

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Co-Directors
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Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
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Alan M. Lerner, Esq.
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Morgan Model
Drexel Public Health, MPH Candidate
Leticia Silva
University of Pennsylvania, BA Candidate

Community Affiliates
Christine Downs, MSW
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia
Lisa Santos, MD
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia

The Field Center is Recipient of Major Gift

The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice and Research is pleased to announce that a major gift has been awarded by the Glickenhaus Foundation to establish the Glickenhaus Family Court Program under the auspices of the Field Center. This gift will allow the Field Center to launch a new initiative to be located at the Philadelphia Family Court to offer new and needed services to families and children involved in dependency cases. The Glickenhaus Family Court Program will provide social work and multidisciplinary services at the court and allow for training of social work, medical and law students in working with high risk families. The program is partnering with the Philadelphia Family Court to offer the Field Center’s expertise in dependency court cases and creative programming for families while they are on site.
The Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, and Research is excited to announce its First Biennial Child Welfare Conference, *One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare*. Building upon the truly multidisciplinary nature of the Field Center, this conference is appropriate for social workers, doctors, therapists, lawyers, law enforcement officials, judges, psychologists, educators, policy makers, researchers, practitioners, administrators, and others. The conference will bring together experts from around the country to address a range of issues from a multidisciplinary perspective, with topics including the dynamics of race in the child welfare system, trauma recovery, home visiting, permanency planning, mental health issues, innovations in foster care, child neglect, community partnerships, child trafficking, working with families of diverse cultures, the impact of child abuse and neglect on child development, medical and mental health aspects of child sexual abuse, and the legal system.

The Field Center is pleased to partner with Penn’s Wharton School who will host the conference sessions in their new Huntsman Hall. A large turnout is expected from around the country as well as the mid-Atlantic region.

The conference will open with a dynamic Keynote Address by Dave Pelzer, author of *A Child Called “It.”* The second day of the conference will begin with a Conference Plenary on Reforming the Child Welfare System featuring a panel of national experts representing the multiple systems which interface on behalf of children, including public child welfare agencies, the courts, medicine, and child advocates. The closing keynote address will be delivered by the Honorable Leonard Edwards, Supervising Judge of the Santa Clara Superior Court.

Registration for the conference is available online at www.ssw.upenn.edu/cwconference. For more information, please contact Mindy Berman at 215-573-4769 or confer@ssw.upenn.edu.

**OPENING KEYNOTE: DAVE PELZER**

The Field Center is pleased to have Dave Pelzer, New York Times bestselling author of *A Child Called “It,”* open the conference with a keynote address on “The Real Heroes.” A dynamic speaker, Dave will chronicle his personal journey as a victim of child abuse and pay tribute to those professionals who dedicate themselves to making a difference in the lives of children. Dave’s background includes being the victim of profound child abuse while growing up in California until his placement in foster care at the age of 12. His first of six books, *A Child Called “It,”* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and has been on the New York Times Bestseller list for six years; he has had a record four books on the NY Times Bestseller list simultaneously. Dave is the recipient of numerous awards including the National Point of Light Award, the JC Penney Golden Rule Award, and the Outstanding Young Person of the World. He was named one of the Ten Outstanding Young Americans and was a carrier of the Centennial flame in the 1976 Olympics. He has received commendations from Presidents Reagan, Bush, Clinton and George W. Bush.

**CLOSING KEYNOTE: THE HONORABLE LEONARD P. EDWARDS**

One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare will wrap up with a luncheon and keynote address by the Honorable Leonard P. Edwards. A highly respected jurist, Judge Edwards is the Supervising Judge of Santa Clara (California) County Superior Court. Judge Edwards is the recipient of the 2004 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence, bestowed upon him at the U.S. Supreme Court. One of the most prestigious judicial honors in the country, the Rehnquist award is presented annually by the National Center for State Courts to a state court judge who exemplifies the highest level of judicial excellence, integrity, fairness and professional ethics. In Santa Clara County, Judge Edwards’ efforts resulted in the juvenile dependency court being designated a national model by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. His court is one of the most visited courts in the country, with hundreds of legal professionals traveling there to observe and learn the model practices Judge Edwards implemented, such as dependency court mediation, family group conferencing, direct calendaring, and court coordination. In 1999, Judge Edwards established one of the country’s first dependency drug treatment courts, which has been named a Mentor Court by the National Institute of Drug Court Professionals.

Please see page 7 for information on conference sponsorship.

The Field Center is now accepting applications for vendors / exhibitors for its upcoming event “One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare” June 2-3, 2005

For more information call (215) 573-4769 or write confer@ssw.upenn.edu
### PROJECT UPDATES

#### Dependency Court Waiting Room Project Update

The goal of this project is to improve the experience of families using services at the Philadelphia Family Court. We are determining the environmental and social needs of families in the family court dependency waiting room. This project is a joint effort among the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research, Philadelphia Family Court, Drexel University's School of Public Health, Penn Design, and the Philadelphia Advocates Round Table. This project entails a three-pronged needs assessment: pilot interviews administered to families, revised interviews administered to an expanded sample of families, and a survey distributed to court personnel including judges, lawyers and advocates for both the parents and children.

The pilot phase has been completed and the project is moving into the second phase. Interviews were administered to 10 families in the Philadelphia Family Court throughout the month of January, and the multidisciplinary research team is reviewing the preliminary results. In the second phase, an additional survey will be administered to professional stakeholders including judges, lawyers, advocates and social workers. In addition, the interview administered to the families is being revised based on the preliminary results of the pilot sample and a second phase of family interviews will begin once this process is complete. This phase is expected to be complete by the end of March and results will be analyzed during April and May.

#### The Child Protective Services Training and Program Development Project

The Department of Human Services (DHS) previously contracted the University of Pennsylvania's Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice and Research to become one of several collaborative partners in strengthening its front-end decision making services. Co-Directors Carol Wilson Spigner and Richard Gelles serve as Co-Principal Investigators on the project.

The overall goal of the front-end reform effort is to assess current practices and implement improved strategies that will help to assure the safety and well being of Philadelphia’s children. A major priority is improving the quality and timeliness of front-end services: referrals, investigation and decision-making.

DHS initially contracted with the Field Center to assess training needs of DHS staff and develop training curriculum. As the collaboration evolved, it became apparent that other needs warranted more immediate attention. In particular, DHS requested the expertise of the Field Center in developing a procedures manual for workers involved in conducting child abuse and neglect investigations. The project team members have developed a draft version of components of a procedures manual and submitted it to DHS for review. Pending the review and subsequent edits, staff will conduct focus groups with DHS front end staff to get their input before compiling the final draft.

### FIELD CENTER ADDRESSES MISSING LINK IN CHILD WELFARE

In the fall of 2004 one of the Field Center members came to the group with a challenge recently encountered in the field. A child came to see the practitioner and disclosed sexual abuse. The alleged abuse took place while the child was visiting extended family members out of state, and the child disclosed abuses upon her return home. The practitioner, a mandated reporter, called the child welfare services from the state wherein the alleged abuse took place to make a report. The report was not accepted because in that state, child abuse reports can only be made if the victim lives in state. The practitioner then contacted child welfare services in the state where the child lives, however, the report was not accepted because in that state, child abuse reports can only be made if the perpetrator lives in state. Upon further discussion, Field Center staff concurred that problems such as the one described above were common in the field of child welfare.

Child welfare services are run at the state level. There is no national child welfare system, thus there is no federally mandated standard of practice or procedure for handling reports or investigations. In states such as Pennsylvania, the issue is further complicated because child welfare provisions are delegated and regulated at the county level. Due to the compartmentalization of child welfare services, complicated jurisdictional issues arise, such as the one described above.

In response to the gap in service provision within the child welfare system described above, the Field Center is currently pursuing a new project in an attempt to eliminate jurisdictional holes in the system. It has come to the attention of Field Center staff and affiliates that there is a need for standard protocol designed to address inter-state and inter-county jurisdictional issues in regard to reporting and investigation procedures in child welfare systems nationally. Field Center staff is currently examining the issues from a legal perspective, social service best practices perspective, and working towards the development of an intervention strategy to address this problem.

The Field Center offers exciting partnering opportunities from fellowship to corporate sponsorship to endowment of space. Thanks to a generous challenge grant from the Joseph and Marie Field Foundation, every unrestricted gift, pledge, and grant providing either operating or endowment support for the Field Center may be eligible for matching funds on a one to one basis.

For more details please contact:

Nadina R. Deigh, Director of Development
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THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN

In the United States there are approximately 5,000 to 8,000 unaccompanied immigrant children detained each year. An “unaccompanied” child is a child that has been orphaned, abandoned, or separated from an adult or caretaker. There are normally multiple federal and state agencies involved in dealing with unaccompanied immigrant children.

Immigrant children may have experienced any of the following: persecution or targeting; abuse, neglect, or abandonment; trafficking or smuggling; forced military recruitment or portering; child labor exploitation or begging; gang violence or recruitment; or “night commuters”.

There are various approaches for working with immigrant children. Selected immigration-based legal remedies for minors include: Special Juvenile status, Violence Against Women Act, Trafficking Victim Protection Act, Visas for Victims of Serious Crimes, and Asylum.

The non-legal needs of immigrant children include counseling, child welfare, shelter, psycho-social assessments, education, faith needs, and support for legal cases.

Relevant legislation to follow:

- Senate Resolution 449—
- Unaccompanied Alien Child Protection Act of 2001—Bill # S.121—Sponsor Feinstein (D-CA)
- Widows and Orphans Act of 2003—Bill # S.1353—Sponsor Brownback (R-KS)

Widows and Orphans Act of 2003—Bill # S.1353—Sponsor Brownback (R-KS)

- Establishes a special immigrant category (N Visa) for certain orphans and women at risk of harm.
- Would help resettle women and children at risk.

Information provided by Gregory Chen, Director of Policy Analysis and Research for the U.S. Committee for Refugees.
Cindy W. Christian, MD, School of Medicine
The answer to that question depends on who you ask. Ask me, a pediatrician, and the answer is simple: Be the voice of the child if necessary. In the course of my work, I have learned that a pediatrician can have a profound effect on the well-being of a child—ways I never imagined when I first arrived in Philadelphia. It takes knowledge, experience, objectivity, some flexibility, conviction, some perseverance, and a desire to do the right thing, but with those in place, a pediatrician has a voice that can be much louder and stronger than that of a child. Advocacy is part of what physicians do on a daily basis, mostly advocating for individual patients, but also at institutional, community and national levels. Physicians have a mandate to watch out for children who are in need of protection, and we take this role seriously. If that means calling child welfare to report suspected maltreatment, or testifying in court about the medical and health concerns of a patient, we make ourselves available. In doing our work, however, we have to think about the child in the context of the family and community. So that sometimes we advocate for the family as well as the child. Finally, in order to be an effective advocate for a child, it is important to be in touch with the community you serve. Understanding child welfare laws and procedures, and having a relationship with members of the child welfare agency, police department, district attorney’s office, and other professionals in the community gives the pediatrician’s voice credibility—which is, of course, important as an advocate.

Richard J. Gelles, PhD, School of Social Work
At the risk of begging the question, I am going to ask, who is the client? It has always been my impression that child welfare case workers, supervisors, and administrators tend to see the biological parents as the clients. There are many reasons why the biological parents are seen as the clients: federal law, state law, and the simple fact that the biological parents are the ones expected to change if they are to retain or regain custody of their maltreated children.

To me, the child welfare law and practice give considerable voice to biological parents. They have significant constitutional rights, they have legal representation, and they have standing in court.

Children, on the other hand, have few rights granted by Constitutional case law. Often, children do not have qualified legal representation. And, children are not seen as the ones who must change. Once children are deemed to be in a safe setting, the system’s attention turns to the biological parents and, to a lesser extent, the foster or kin caregivers.

So to me, the question is how do we get children’s voices into the child welfare system? The answer requires turning the initial question onto its head: how do we make children the focus and clients of the child welfare system? Once we do, they will have a greater voice in the system.

Alan M. Lerner, JD, School of Law
The problem is one of perspective. Parents and the CPS agency necessarily see the “child’s best interest” through the prism of their own perspective. Nothing could be more natural. Social psychologists have long since proved that all of us see and hear what we expect and are motivated to see and hear. French writer Anais Nin, put it this way, “We don’t see things as they are. We see things as we are.”

As children mature, not simply when they cross the threshold from minor to adult, they steadily develop a clearer understanding of what they need, as well as what they want. And with competent counseling, that understanding can be clarified and enhanced. Of course, even with competent counseling not every teenager will select what is actually in his or her best interest. But even then, the child needs to have his or her voice heard in the proceeding. They need a spokesperson whose only purpose is to speak for them, to state what the child wants and why. That spokesperson needs to be a lawyer, because the proceedings in which the child’s future will be decided are legal proceedings in which lawyers represent all other perspectives. The bedrock of our notion of fundamental fairness, also known as “due process of law,” is a reasonable opportunity to be “heard” in matters where one’s important interests, in these cases decisions about the child’s future, are to be decided.

To have their voices heard in legal proceedings affecting their lives in critical ways, children need lawyers, and the lawyers need to be, or to have access to, counselors experienced in communicating with, and counseling children.

Carol Wilson Spigner, DSW, School of Social Work
The child welfare system is a complicated organization that is charged with the protection of children and making decisions not only about their safety but their future and their life chances. While the child is the primary client, child welfare services (along with the court) becomes the arbitrator of the child’s relationship with his or her family. Decisions made and services rendered will shape the future for the child and their family. For me, the client’s voice is that of the child but because of the child’s intimate relationship to parents and the potential consequence of loss of family, the voices of both children and parents need to be heard.

Assuring that the child’s voice is present is complicated because the child or youth is a person in development and is dependent on the adults in their lives. The child’s capacity to weigh the alternatives is limited. Getting the individual child’s view provides important information that needs to be considered in decision making and requires the following:

- Talking with children about their circumstances and eliciting their wishes
- Documenting their verbal and non verbal responses to parents and other caretakers and
- Making sure there is independent legal representation for the child

The agency can also be informed by the regular feedback from youth and young adults who have been in care. Some jurisdictions are bringing youth together for forums and advisory boards. Some agencies are seeking to hire the alumni of foster care in order to strengthen the child’s perspective in service delivery. Former foster children are also being engaged to help train staff and foster parents.

For this system to be fair and equitable, parents’ voices must be heard as well. Efforts are being made to more actively engage both parents in shaping the service goals and strategies and planning for their children. As with youth, parents’ feedback should be sought. When agencies have established birth parent advisory bodies, they have identified new ways of working that not only protect children but improve the way families are helped.
FOCUS ON THE FIELD CENTER

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER HIGHLIGHT
Craig Snider, MBA

Mr. Craig Snider first learned about the Field Center for Children’s Policy, Practice, and Research during a discussion with a fellow Wharton Business School graduate and classmate. For the last two years, he has served as an active member of the Advisory Board.

Mr. Snider believes that the Field Center can spread “expertise and knowledge” throughout the child welfare system by serving as a resource for communities both locally and nationally. When asked about his vision for the Field Center, Mr. Snider explained the importance of differentiating between the vision for the agency and the charter for the Advisory Board. Mr. Snider humbly defers to the Co-Directors to establish the center’s vision, but recognizes the importance of Board commitment in advancing the agency’s mission and function. He points out that Board development is the first step in the essential process of capacity building, which will permit the Field Center to achieve its goals. Mr. Snider’s empathy for children and his passion for the cause are directly related to his being a father of five. The Advisory Board members bring a wealth of expertise to the table, and Mr. Snider sees his contribution as his ability to attract financial support through effective leadership and advocacy.

Mr. Snider received his Bachelor’s degree in history and communications from the University of Pennsylvania and his MBA from the Wharton Graduate School of Management. Being part of the Field Center Advisory Board means he is once again part of the Penn community, an opportunity which he welcomes enthusiastically.

CO-DIRECTOR HIGHLIGHT
Cindy Christian, M.D.

As one of the Co-Directors, Dr. Cindy Christian brings the medical perspective to the multidisciplinary work done at the Field Center and represents both Penn’s School of Medicine and the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia.

Dr. Christian completed Medical School at Albany Medical College and began working with child abuse victims during her pediatric residency at CHOP. Based on the advice of Dr. Ludwig, who was leading CHOP’s child abuse program at the time, Dr. Christian became involved with working with child victims of abuse and neglect and has become a leading expert in the field.

Dr. Christian was initially attracted to the Field Center because of her interest in the work of Richard Gelles, also a Co-Director at the Field Center. According to Dr. Christian, the Field Center plays an important role in the field of child welfare because doctors “can’t possibly do this work alone or in the isolation of a hospital.” Rather, Dr. Christian believes that collaborative relationships between doctors, social workers, lawyers, law enforcement officials, legislators, child advocates, and others creates a “collective voice” that is much greater than the voice of any individual. The Field Center allows her to “contribute what she knows best” about the area of child abuse.

Dr. Christian’s study on the influence of race on medical investigation and reporting, as published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, has been widely read and contributed greatly to an awareness of the role of bias in reporting from the medical perspective. While Dr. Christian recognizes that her research and teaching will remain focused in medicine, she appreciates the necessity and value of collaborative relationships between disciplines in the field of child welfare as practiced at the Field Center.

Outside of the Field Center, Dr. Christian holds an Endowed Chair in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia. In addition to being a pediatrician at CHOP, Dr. Christian conducts and publishes research on child abuse, testifies in child abuse cases, is an advocate for victims of child abuse and neglect, and teaches nationally to physicians, lawyers, investigators, and social workers.
Robin Mekonnen received her Masters in Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work in 2002. In her second year as a Masters Student, Ms. Mekonnen was an Intern with the Center for Children's Policy, Practice, and Research (later renamed the Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice, and Research). Upon her acceptance as a MSW/PhD dual degree student, Ms. Mekonnen stayed on with the Field Center as she began working towards her PhD. During her time at the Field Center, Ms. Mekonnen has worked on projects such as the Philadelphia Department of Human Services Front-End Reform Project and the Evaluation of the University of Pennsylvania Interdisciplinary Child Advocacy Clinic (ICAC). Additionally, she has collaborated with the Center for Research on Youth and Social Policy (CRYSP) by contributing to the Children's Rights Inc. Project in NJ and the Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition Project, assessing the integration of children with disabilities in local work programs.

Ms. Mekonnen is a research assistant at the Field Center, and is currently working on her dissertation proposal examining the decision making practices regarding cases of termination of parental rights in child welfare cases. Ms. Mekonnen's primary interests revolve around the systemic problems of child welfare that overlap the legal, social, and policy sectors. She aspires to continue to do vertical work in child welfare, and develop research on policies and procedures in the system that are maladaptive, and to inform system reform.

Ms. Mekonnen has worked for over ten years in a variety of direct service child welfare settings. Ms. Mekonnen anticipates completing her PhD in 2006, and is still uncertain as to whether she will work to immediately enter academia, or whether she will seek government or other research experience.

Are you looking for ways to promote your organization/ agency? You can reach a national audience of social workers, therapists, child welfare workers, physicians, nurses, attorneys, and court personnel by partnering with The Field Center for Children's Policy, Practice & Research and participating in the “One Child, Many Hands – Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare” Sponsorship Program. This 1st biennial child welfare conference will serve as a forum led by local and national experts focusing on cutting edge work by multiple disciplines to address the broad spectrum of issues facing child welfare. Sponsorship can be an effective tool for improving your organization's name recognition or enhancing your reputation in the child welfare profession. There are a number of sponsorships available in addition to the Lead Sponsor opportunity (whose benefit designation is in the headline). Sponsorships can be tailor-made to fit your particular needs.

For more information on this great opportunity, please contact Melissa Coleman, Associate Director of Development and Alumni Relations at the School of Social Work at (215) 898-5526.
NEWSLETTER CALENDAR DATES

March 6-8
Arlington, VA
2005 BACW National Conference
A New Covenant: Reengineering Systems of Care for African American Children
Black Administrators in Child Welfare
440 First Street NW, Third Floor
Washington DC 20001-2085
Phone: (202) 662-4284
E-mail: bacw@cwla.org
www.blackadministrators.org

March 9-11
Washington, DC
CWLA National Conference
Children 2005: Crossing the Cultural Divide
CWLA 2005 National Conference
440 First Street, NW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20001
Phone: (202) 942-0305 or (202) 942-0308
E-mail: register@cwla.org
http://www.cwla.org/conferences/

April 18-23
Boston, MA
15th National Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect
Supporting Promising Practices and Positive Outcomes: A Shared Responsibility
15th NCCAN, c/o Pal-Tech, Inc.
1901 North Moore St., Ste. 204
Arlington, VA 22209
Phone: (703) 528-0435
Email: 15conf@pal-tech.com

May 2-4
New Orleans, LA
2005 Finding Better Ways Conference
Addressing the Mental Health Needs of Children, Youth, and Families
440 First Street, NW, Third Floor
Washington, DC 20001-2085
Phone: (212) 638-2952

June 2-3
Philadelphia, PA
One Child, Many Hands: A Multidisciplinary Conference on Child Welfare
Phone: (215) 573-4769
www.ssw.upenn.edu/cwconference/

June 15-18
New Orleans, LA
American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children: 13th Annual National Colloquium
http://apsac.fmhi.usf.edu/